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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 002659

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/09/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [IR](#) [EUN](#)
SUBJECT: SURVEYING EU MEMBERS ON THEIR IRAN CIVIL SOCIETY
AND DEMOCRACY PROGRAMMING

Classified By: EUR Acting A/S Kurt Volker for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is an action request; please see paragraph 3.

¶2. (C) Background: Department wishes to gain current information about EU member states, efforts to promote democratic reform in Iran, including civil society, respect for human rights, and freedom of information. Through its Freedom Agenda and diplomatic engagement with like-minded governments and NGOs, Department engages in programming in all of these reform areas; Congress authorized \$76.1 million in FY 06 to help fund that programming. While we cooperate closely with various allies, we are seeking updated information on other EU governments, democratic reform programs in Iran. The EU and its member states work closely with us to promote peace and freedom throughout the Middle East. Iran,s totalitarian regime, disregard for human rights and the rule of law, state sponsorship of terrorism, hegemonic ambitions in the Middle East, and nuclear ambitions all pose serious threats in the Middle East and worldwide. While UNSCR 1737 is an important tool to counter Iran,s nuclear program, international pressure also remains critical to promoting democratization in Iran. The talking points contained in this cable address EU members, questions about U.S. democratization initiatives for Iran. Posts are requested to solicit parallel information about host country Iran democracy efforts.

¶3. (SBU) Action request: Posts are requested to provide senior host country officials with information on U.S. democratization efforts in Iran and gather information on similar host country programming. Post may draw from the points in paragraph 4 as needed. Please report responses via cable by January 24, 2007. Note that Iran-related reporting must use the SIPDIS caption and the IR country tag.

¶4. (SBU/REL EU MEMBER GOVERNMENTS)

Begin Suggested Talking Points:

-- Iran,s disregard for human rights and the rule of law, its role as the world,s leading state sponsor of terrorism, its destabilizing activities in the Middle East, and its nuclear ambitions all threaten peace and freedom.

-- While UNSCR 1737 is an important tool to counter Iran,s nuclear program, international pressure also remains critical to promoting democratic reform in Iran.

-- Democratic reform -- including the promotion of civil society, respect for human rights, and freedom of information)- is a value shared by governments worldwide.

-- The success of more moderate candidates in the December 15

elections demonstrates that there are other voices besides that of the current Iranian regime that we should be trying to reach.

-- The United States would welcome collaboration with interested European partners, whether in the public or private sector, to advance our mutual goal of a more democratic, open, stable Iran)- one that could play a constructive role in the international community instead of a destabilizing one.

-- Many of our current efforts may be complementary.

-- We are pleased to provide you with information on U.S. efforts to promote reform in Iran. Our strategy is to maintain a consistent message on core democratic values while ensuring protection of the courageous Iranian men and women working to advance democratic reform within their own country.

-- The Fiscal Year 2006 budget for democracy programs in Iran consist of a \$6.55 million earmark to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) for Iran and Syria as part of an overall Department \$10 million earmark (minimum threshold for Iran democracy spending) from the regular FY ,06 budget, plus an additional \$66.1 million from the FY ,06 supplemental budget for U.S. government efforts to promote reform in Iran.

-- Of the original \$10 million from the FY06 Foreign

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Operations Bill, DRL is ready to obligate \$4.15 million.

-- The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs is currently in the process of awarding \$27 million dollars in FY06 funding for its Iran democracy project.

-- These projects aim to develop democracy, support human rights, build civil society, provide the Iranian people with unbiased information; and promote understanding of Western culture. Projects target influential democratic actors and groups, including labor, women, and students.

-- The \$66.1 million included \$36.1 million to the Broadcasting Board of Governors to increase broadcasting of USG Farsi language broadcasts into Iran via Radio Farda and Voice of American Persian Television, \$20 million to the U.S. Department of State,s Middle East Partnership Initiative for democracy promotion programs, \$5 million to the U.S. Department of State,s Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau to fund cultural and educational exchanges, and \$5 million to the U.S. Department of State,s Bureau of International Information Policy for increased Internet access and presence in Iran. We are allocating additional resources to the expansion of the State Department,s Persian website, which offers a channel for direct discussion with the Iranian people.

Among our key goals for these programs are to:

-- Expand the reach of Radio Farda by contracting for another radio transmitter to overcome Iranian jamming;

-- Expand Voice of American Persian Television to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;

-- Promote competitive, independent, and professional television and radio content production;

-- Utilize innovative technologies to communicate with the Iranian people, for example, development of innovative Web content (eg. children,s programming), use of SMS, and podcasting);

-- Provide communication tools for activists, including

Internet communication and training for journalists;

-- Help Iranians conduct civic education campaigns that develop an understanding of rights and responsibilities under a democracy;

-- Support human rights defenders, rule of law, and justice programs;

-- Support civil society development and network building, including independent labor; and

-- Support efforts to document human rights abuses by the Iranian regime.

-- We also seek to internationalize the message on Iran. We coordinate public statements with like-minded states and encourage international bodies to press Iran for improved respect for human rights and transparency in decision-making.

We do this in order to focus attention and pressure on the Iranian regime, and to provide some degree of political cover for activists. In all our statements on Iran -- including on the nuclear issue -- we emphasize our support for the Iranian people and their hope for a better future.

-- As is the case with our programs in other countries ruled by repressive regimes, the United States does not make public the identities of the Iranian democracy activists who elect to work with us. Our programs are open to all who are genuinely committed to a peaceful, democratic process in Iran. Grants are made on the basis of proposals (either solicited or unsolicited) to conduct projects within the areas described above. The USG supports well conceived programs, not particular groups.

-- The United States would welcome information on your government's efforts to promote democratic reform in Iran. Are there areas in which our governments could collaborate? Do you have NGOs that receive funding from your government or the EU, or independent NGOs operating in your country, that also promote reform in Iran?

-- The United States would appreciate learning more about the activities of your government and/or NGOs in Iran to help ensure that our collective efforts are complementary (not duplicative), and to identify possible areas for collaboration.

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